

*The First 200 Years*



EMANUEL  
UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST

Lincolnton, North Carolina

The Rev. H. Linn Finger, Pastor



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## EMANUEL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

### I. Our Faith, Our Heritage

Where does one begin in writing the history of a church? The easy answer to that question would be to simply begin with the date of the church founding. But that would be like beginning to tell the story of the United States of America at July 4, 1776 - as if there were no pilgrims, no Lost Colony, no Spanish exploration, etc. We believe there was a worshipping congregation of the German Reformed faith in Lincolnton, N. C. by the year 1785 - but that is certainly not the beginning of our history.

At the other extreme, it could be argued that the history of every Christian congregation began with the Resurrection of Christ - and that would be true. Between these two extremes this writer has chosen an arbitrary starting point with the migration of our fathers and mothers of the faith from the Old World to the New. It is a tale worth telling. It is a history to inform and inspire.

#### Our Palatinate Forefathers

When they arrived in Lincoln County, North Carolina, our forefathers were known as "Pennsylvania Dutch." These are the same people who, when arriving a short time before in Pennsylvania, were called the "Palatines." This refers to the region of their origin which was the Palatinate. The Palatinate was both a geographical and civil

designation for a portion of Southwestern Germany near the upper reaches of the Rhine river.

From this region came shiploads of German people. From a bare trickle in the late 1600's, this immigration rose to a flood by the year 1709. In that year more than 2,000 Palatines arrived in London. From England and Holland these refugees continued their voyage to the new world. Most landed in Philadelphia, though a few came in through the harbor at Charleston. The English were deeply sympathetic for these people. The gentle Quaker, William Penn, offered land in his colony of Pennsylvania. After him, Queen Anne offered inducements to come to England, later to America.

Many sailed to America directly from the Netherlands. Their origin in the land of the Dutch, coupled with the fact that "German" is translated as "deutch" led to much confusion regarding the true origin of the Palatines. Among their English-speaking neighbors, they came to be known as the "Pennsylvania Dutch." This misnomer was applied later to our ancestors who came down to the Carolinas from Pennsylvania.

The tide of emigration which began in 1709 continued unabated throughout the eighteenth century. Several reasons have been presented for this wholesale exodus from the Palatinate. The most frequently mentioned is the devastation of war. The Thirty Years War wrought great damage over much of Europe. Lying between France and the heartland of Germany, the Palatinate was especially hard hit. In the latter part of the seventeenth century the armies of Louis XIV under Marshal Turenne thoroughly devastated the province. In 1688, partly to vent his anger against the Protestants who dominated the region, the Grand Monarch invaded and laid waste again. Another invasion in 1708

left the "houses burned, cattle slaughtered, and vineyards uprooted." The people were industrious, the land was rich, but by the early 1700's it must have seemed to our forefathers that they were fated to experience total loss and devastation at least once in every generation.

To the curse of war was added an unkind prank of nature, when at the end of 1708, a winter such as occurs only once in a century, blighted all of Europe. The cold began in October and by November it was said, "firewood would not burn in the open air!" In January of 1709 wine and spirits froze into solid blocks of ice, birds of the air fell dead, and, it is said, saliva congealed in its fall from mouth to ground. The fruit trees were killed and vines were destroyed. The calamity of this unusually bitter winter fell most heavily on the husbandmen and vine-dressers, who in consequence made up more than half of the emigrants of 1709.

It has been variously reported that a desire to escape religious persecution was a chief cause for our ancestors departure from Germany. This is a romantic notion which does not seem to stand up under close examination. True, the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) did provide that the religion of the ruler should be the religion of the people. One can see the possibility for abuse and religious coercion. Apparently, however, the three officially recognized churches - Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist (Reformed) - coexisted peacefully.

The Elector of the Palatinate in 1709 was John William, Duke of Newburg, a Catholic. Since this is the year when the greatest emigration began it might be speculated that desire for religious freedom

was a contributing factor. Yet, of all the Palatine refugees who passed through London in the year 1709, one of every three was a member of the Roman Catholic faith. From this it should be clear that a desire to provide for the physical welfare and prosperity of the family was the primary reason the Palatine father made the difficult decision to leave the "vaterland" for a dangerous journey into the unknown.

The Palatinate, as a political region, ceased to exist in 1801. Before the great wars of the seventeenth century it was described as a most beautiful country, graced with highly cultivated fields, vine-clad hills and enchanting scenery. The ruined castles of Heidelberg, Darmstadt and the upper Rhone valley tell of an earlier feudal period of wealth and glory.

## II. Pioneer Days in Lincoln County

As mentioned above, the Palatinate immigration to America began in the late 1600's and experienced rapid growth during the second decade of the 1700's. Apparently the men and women who planted the Reformed faith in Lincoln County were not among this early wave of immigration.

Earliest church records mention such representative family names as Hoke, Finger, Cansler, Botz, Summerow, Reinhardt, Rudisill and Ramsaur (Ramseur).

It might be interesting to trace the origins of these families who were so instrumental not only in establishing a church - but also in the establishment of our community:

**Hoke** - The Hokes of Lincoln County are descended from John Jacob Hoche (Hoke) who arrived in the port of Philadelphia on the ship



"Mortanhouse" in 1728. This same pioneer became the founding pastor of the First Reformed Church in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in 1736. After the death of his 10th child, Johannes (John), in York County, Pennsylvania, John's widow came to North Carolina with her seven children. This was around 1797 or 1798. The Hoches (Hokes) have included many men and women who contributed greatly to their community and their nation in church, education, political life and the military.

**Finger** - The Fingers are descended from Peter Finger who arrived on the ship "St. Andrew" in 1749. For a time, he was a farmer in York County, Pennsylvania but the records show that in the year 1778, he purchased three farms in Lincoln County, North Carolina. His final resting place is marked by a monument near Leepers Creek in the Pumpkin Center community.

**Cansler** - The Canslers of Lincoln County are descended from Philip Cansler. This is probably the same "Philip Gensler" whose name appears on the registry of the ship "Chance" which landed in the port of Philadelphia in the year 1763. The discrepancy in spelling can be explained by the fact that English ship captains, magistrates, registers of deeds, etc. sometimes had great difficulty with German names. It is not uncommon to find the name of one man spelled 6 different ways on 6 different documents. Philip Cansler settled in the southern portion of Lincoln County where he became a large landowner. Names of his progeny are found in the earliest church records of both the Reformed and Lutheran churches of Lincoln and Gaston Counties.

**Rudisill** - At least three Rudisills landed in Philadelphia between the years 1729 and 1749. It is widely accepted (though not

universally accepted) that the Lincoln County Rudisills are descended from "Andres Rutsiele" who arrived in September, 1749 aboard the ship "Phoenix." There is a tradition that the Rudisills were a Swiss family who had settled in the Palatinate region and joined their German neighbors in the journey to the new world.

Ramseur - Like the Rudisills, there is also much uncertainty concerning the origin of the Lincoln County Ramseurs. The most widely accepted theory is that they are descended from "Johannes Dietrich Ramsaur" (Ramseur) who came to America on October 2, 1727 aboard the ship "Adventure." The Ramseur family also became large landholders and have remained prominent in the religious and civic affairs of our community.

Reinhardt - Christian Reinhardt, of Revolutionary War fame - and the first trustee for the "Dutch Presbyterians" (Reformed) congregation, came to America at the age of five. He was in the company of his father Daniel Reinhardt, and they arrived in 1739. More will be written of the Reinhardt's in a subsequent section.

Summerow - Johannes and Henry Summerauer (Summerow) arrived on the ship "Patience" on September 16, 1748 at Philadelphia. As late as 1771, Henry Summerauer is listed as a landowner in Northumberland County, Pennsylvania. In 1782, Henry Hallman deeded Henry Summerow land in Lincoln County, North Carolina. This is probably Henry Summerow, Jr. who became the father of all the Summerows who figure prominently in the history of our area.

Botz - I have not found sufficient information on the origins of the Botz family mentioned above to comment further.

Arriving as they did after the first wave of immigration, these pioneers found much of the better farmlands of Southeastern



Pennsylvania already claimed by earlier arrivals. Some continued westward into Ohio, Indiana and other states. By 1740, many had discovered the Shennandoah Valley route into the Carolinas. The first German arrivals settled east of the Yadkin, founding Reformed congregations such as Grace, Rockwell (c. 1745), Pilgrim, Lexington (c. 1754) and New Gilead, Concord (c. 1766). A few years later farmers followed explorers and fur traders into the frontier wilderness which is now Lincoln County.

As stated above, it would probably not be accurate to claim that our forefathers left their homeland solely for the purpose of free religious expression. It would be entirely accurate, however, to note that worship was a very important part of their lives. At great cost and sacrifice, church buildings were always built very early in the history of every settlement. When church buildings were not available, worship services were conducted in the home. These were not private family services but community events wherein neighbors were invited for the purpose of corporate worship. Abstinence from all but the barest necessities of farm chores was strictly observed on the Sabbath.

These were a pious people. They were the survivors. They, or their ancestors, had lived through a century of warfare in Europe. They had crossed the Atlantic in tiny ships on a voyage which sometimes lasted up to three months. It was common for one in every five to die on such passages. Looking back on such perils encountered and overcome they were quick to give God the praise for His providential care. They did not hesitate to seek His continued guidance and blessing. In a hostile land their religious faith and practice was a connecting link to

the fondly remembered families, farms, villages and churches of the Old Country.

It is most difficult for the Lincoln County resident of this present time to appreciate what life was like in this place a scant two centuries ago. As late as 1774 the October session of general court authorized the payment of bounty on "fourty-nine wolf scalps." Bounties were also awarded for the killing of panthers and wildcats. Deer, bear and turkeys were plentiful. It was during this period that names such as Buffalo Shoals, Beaver Dam Branch and Bear Creek became permanent fixtures on our landscape. The home of Christian Reinhardt resembled a fort more than a home - the better to protect its inhabitants from Indian raids. When Daniel Warlick erected a grist mill on his property in the western end of the county, it had to be built twice - the first one was burned by the Cherokees.

To the children of the Palatinate, bears, wolves and Indians were but temporary inconveniences. Quickly they cleared the fertile bottom-lands. Hugh barns - ever the trademark of the Dutch - were erected. Crops flourished. Herds multiplied. The crude one-room log house was followed in the second generation by the red-painted weatherboard farm house. For the more industrious, this was in turn followed in the third generation by a large brick plantation house.

In spite of the growing prosperity there were yet problems. The hindrance of foreign language and custom was felt for a time. English was the official language of the state. Laws were written and expounded in English. A desire to have a wider part in the civil affairs of the day led to a gradual "anglicizing" of the Dutch. Last to change was the church. Many years after the discarding of the German language from home and school, it was still used in the worship service

as the minister read from Luther's Bible and expounded on the word in the mother tongue.

### III. The Old White Church

In the latter half of the eighteenth century there were two principle settlements in the western portion of Lincoln County. These were the Warlick Settlement and the Ramsours Mill Settlement. The Warlick Settlement centered around the mill erected by Daniel Warlick on a branch of Howards Creek, about 5 miles west of the present city of Lincolnton. This would have been around 1750, perhaps a few years earlier. Another settler from the Palatinate, Dietrich Ramseur, also erected an early mill on his land located on Clark's Creek just above its confluence with the South Fork River. Several trading routes crossed below this mill site so it was inevitable that the Ramseur's Mill Settlement became a well known landmark.

The strong religious piety of the Germans led the inhabitants of the Warlick Settlement to erect a church in their midst. This was known as the "Schoolhouse Church." It was a joint effort of the Lutheran and Reformed people and dates to the year 1767. (Some would say earlier). There were no resident pastors of either Lutheran or Reformed persuasion, so, services were probably held on an intermittent schedule by circuit riding preachers.

By the year 1785 the area around Ramsours Mill had grown in population and the sentiment for establishing a town was strong.

Accordingly, in 1784 the General Assembly appointed Joseph Dickson, John Caruth, John Wilson, Joseph Steele and Nicholas Friday, to buy 100 acres of land "as near the center of the county as may be and to

contract with proper workmen to build a court house, prison and stocks thereon."

The Commissioners acted, and early in 1784, the Assembly set forth in an Act that they had entered 300 acres of vacant and unappropriated land between the lines of Phillip Kancellor (Cansler) and Christian Reinhardt, and had laid off 50 acres for a town and sold lots. This site the Assembly "established into a town which shall be called Lincolnton." Joseph Dickson and the other Commissioners named in 1784 were continued as "Town Trustees and Directors."

No one can state with certainty when the first church was built in this new town. It is, however, an established fact that on January 10, 1788, a deed was made by Joseph Dickson, in consideration for ten shillings (about \$2.50) to Christian Reinhardt, agent for the "Dutch Presbyterians," and Andrew Heedick, agent for the "Dutch Lutherans" involving two acres and sixteen poles of land located in the southwest section of the town. This is the same lot which now occupies the corner of East Church Street and South Aspen Street upon which is found the Old White Church burial ground along with several commerical buildings.

In the description of this transfer of lands is found the following statement: "said land is purchased for the purpose of building thereon a meeting house for public worship, school houses, both Dutch and English, and for a place for the burial of the dead, and the said societies have at their joint expense already built a house for public worship on the premises, and the said societies, not having been incorporated, are desirous that the lands hereby intended to be conveyed.

One can only speculate as to the date of the exact establishment of the Reformed congregation in Lincolnton. Working backwards from

January, 1788, when a building was already in place, we can assume a certain passage of time for the planning and actual construction of said building. Before that, there had to be a time of congregational organization. Who can say on what date a church organization became a reality? The arbitrary date of 1785 may be too late. In any event it is fairly certain that the "School House Church" (later to be known as Daniels - in honor of the pioneer Daniel Warlick) was the "mother church" of the Dutch Meeting House in Lincolnton. Many of the same individuals and families who had been faithful members of the Lutheran and Reformed Church in the Warlick Settlement now were found to be members of the first church to be organized in the City of Lincolnton.

The Dutch meeting house was not an imposing structure to say the least. It was simply a one-story log structure, of colonial design, furnished with crude wooden appointments. It stood thus until 1819 when a second story was built on it, weatherboarded, ceiled and a new pulpit installed. The pulpit was high, and reached by a stairway from each side, overspread with a sounding board. Pews were high-backed and there were ample galleries. A bell was added in 1827. The church was painted white in 1830, from which the structure was named "The White Church." The Dutch and English school houses were never built.

First available records of the Church are dated 1794. At that time Rev. Andrew Loretz was pastor of the Reformed congregation, and the Rev. John Gottfried Arends was pastor of the Lutheran congregation. These ministers, being warm friends, ministered to their people without incident as long as they lived. Family names which appear on the first record include Hoke, Finger, Cansler, Botz, Summerow, Reinhardt and Ramsaur, all ancestors of the current population.



After the death of Rev. Andrew Loretz, for sixteen years the Reformed Church had no pastor on the parish. Beginning about 1823, under the leadership of Dr. Humphrey Hunter and his successor Rev. Joseph E. Bell, representing the Concord Presbytery, the Presbyterians occupied the White Church along with the Lutherans. Doubtless taking advantage of existing confusion among the people, resulting from the term "Dutch Presbyterians" which appears in the text of the deed to that property, virtually the entire Reformed congregation was enrolled as Presbyterians. First records of the Presbyterian Church in Lincolnton, dated February 14, 1823, report Joseph E. Bell, Moderator, and John Hoke, David Ramsaur, Peter Summey and Michael Reinhardt, Elders. These are names normally appearing on the roll of Reformed churches in the area.

A marked change took place in the fortunes of the Reformed congregation, when, in 1828, Rev. John G. Fritchey came to Lincolnton. Through his effort the deed for the White Church property was submitted to the court, with the request that a decision be made with reference to the term "Dutch Presbyterians." The court ruled that the term meant "Dutch Reformed", thus putting an entirely different light on recent conduct of Presbyterian leadership. The Reformed congregation was reorganized. Subsequently, a division occurred in the Presbyterian Church, and a majority of its members enrolled in the Reformed Church, reclaiming, in a measure, losses sustained by the previous confusion. Mr. Fritchey continued to serve the congregation until 1839, when he returned to Pennsylvania. From the fourth Sunday in 1839, the Presbyterians held no more services in the White Church.

The Reformed congregation continued its organization under pastoral supervision of Rev. J. H. Crawford, 1840-1842, Solomon S.

Middlekauff, 1842-1845, and David Crooks, 1846-1859. The Classis of North Carolina met in this church in 1853. But the congregation could never regain its former strength and ceased to hold regular weekly services after 1859. When the Classis met at Daniel's Church in 1866, in his report on the "State of Religion," Rev. P. Allison Long remarked, "It is to be regretted that the congregation at Lincolnton, one of the oldest and once one of the most flourishing in the bounds of the Classis, has become destitute of regular pastoral care."

Visiting missionaries conducted occasional services and took care of sacramental functions from time to time for the dwindling flock. Dr. John A. Foil, on subsidy from the Board of Home Missions, supplied the congregation in 1882. From 1885 to 1890 pastoral care was provided by Dr. Joseph L. Murphy, then pastor of the Lincoln Charge, residing in Maiden, and ministers stationed west of the Catawba River continued their ministerial services to them as schedules permitted.

The Old White Church was consumed by fire the night of December 23, 1893. Thus was "blotted out a building with which all the religious history of the vicinity was associated." For during its long period of service to the community, Reformed, Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopal Baptist, and perhaps others, worshipped there. Quite possibly, in each case, first meetings of their respective congregations were held in that historic house.

Since the property had been deeded to the Reformed and Lutheran people in the vicinity, involving specific restrictions and after a lapse of time, negotiations between the two parties began, seeking a satisfactory settlement. Because the Lutheran congregation had erected a church building on the lot, complications developed. However, the

Classis of North Carolina of the Reformed Church in the United States, approved a "quit claim deed" settlement for the consideration of \$75.00 as early as 1898, and on April 19, 1900, the transaction was reported as having been completed. The sum of \$75.00 received from the sale of the Lincolnton church property was "turned over to the Joint Consistory of the Lincoln Charge to be held and invested by them as may seem best."

#### IV. Emanuel Reborn

Following the destruction of the Old White Church, the fortunes of the Reformed Congregation went into another period of serious decline reminiscent of the period following the death of Pastor Loretz. However, the congregation refused to die. Services were held on an occasional basis by ministers serving other churches in Lincoln and Catawba Counties. It appears from the records that the other churches in town were generous in the loaning of their facilities for these services. Among those ministering in Lincolnton were Rev. J. L. Murphy, pastor of Corinth, Hickory, Rev. W. W. Rowe, pastor of Grace, Newton, Rev. Calvin B. Heller, Lincoln Charge, and Dr. Jacob C. Clapp, retired president of Catawba College.

Those ministers not only conducted worship services for the little flock in Lincolnton, but kept alive within them the dream of once again having a place of worship which they could call their own. It was also important that their condition should not be forgotten by the other Reformed congregations of the state, most notable in this effort was the Rev. Dr. J.M.L. Lyerly.

In the year 1909, Dr. Lyerly was editor of the Standard, which was the official church paper for the Classis.

In the May 1, 1909 edition of that publication, he relates his experiences of a recent trip into Lincolnton for the purpose of conducting religious services. With regret he reports that one entire family had recently joined with the Presbyterian congregation and that another family is leaving soon if no progress is made in the rebuilding of our church. Speaking editorially, Dr. Lyerly exhorts the churches of Classis:

"If anything is ever again to be done for the Reformed Church in Lincolnton, now is the time to do it. Brethren, can we afford not to build a church in Lincolnton? If the Home Missions Board will take up this at once, our people will rally, but they are tired of waiting. Let us do something now!"

The pleas of the people and these good pastors apparently were heard; for, in 1910 Classis did overture the National Home Missions Board to enroll Lincolnton as a mission point, and at the same time made a loan of \$500.00 toward purchasing a lot. At its April meeting in 1911, Rev. Samuel W. Beck was commissioned to take charge of this work, but he apparently declined the assignment. At the semi-annual meeting of the Board, July, 1911, Dr. William H. McNairy was commissioned, and began work on the parish the following September 1. The Sunday School was organized the second Sunday in September, and four weeks later, October 8, the church came into being. Twenty six people composed the charter membership roll.

This roll is interesting since it contains names of families who originally settled Lincoln County and environs. It follows: E. D. Fox, Mrs. Laura Fox, P. D. Hinson, Jacob Holbrooks, Ethel Holbrooks, Pearl

Holbrooks, J. T. Keever, Mrs. M. C. Keever, Mrs. B. E. McNairy, Wyatt McNairy, Miss Minnie Michael, Mrs. Hattie Rudisill, Miss Marie Rudisill, B. J. Ramsaur, John J. Ramsaur, K. M. Ramsaur, Mrs. Katie Ramsaur, Danial A. Seagle, Mrs. Catherine Seagle, Vera Seagle, Ruth Seagle, Craig Seagle, Mrs. E. C. Shuford, James A. Shuford, A. P. Willis and Mrs. Della Willis.

E. D. Fox and Daniel A. Seagle were elected elders and James A. Shuford and K. M. Ramsaur, deacons. The new church was named "Heidelberg," but on April 12, 1913, by unanimous vote of the congregation, it was changed to "Emanuel" in the interest of continuity.

Arrangements were made to occupy the first floor of the Odd Fellows Hall, then located on East Main Street, where congregational activities took place until the new sanctuary was ready for occupancy. A lot "two doors" east of the Odd Fellows Hall, and site of the present church was purchased from the Baptist congregation for \$1,600.00. By action of the Church, January 12, 1913, a building committee, composed of Mr. McNairy, Chairman, James A. Shuford, E. C. Shuford and Frank Ramsaur, was appointed with instructions to develop plans for a house of worship and to supervise its erection. The first service was held in the new building December 25, 1913. It is interesting to note that this was almost 20 years to the day since the destruction of the Old White Church. Embers which refused to die were once again fanned into flames - warm and bright.

Looking back from our vantage point seventy-five years later, we must stand in awe of the persistence and dedication of a small group of concerned lay people who would not allow their church - our church - to die. What was the source of their persistence and dedication? Why did they not give up? One clue might be found in the words of an address given



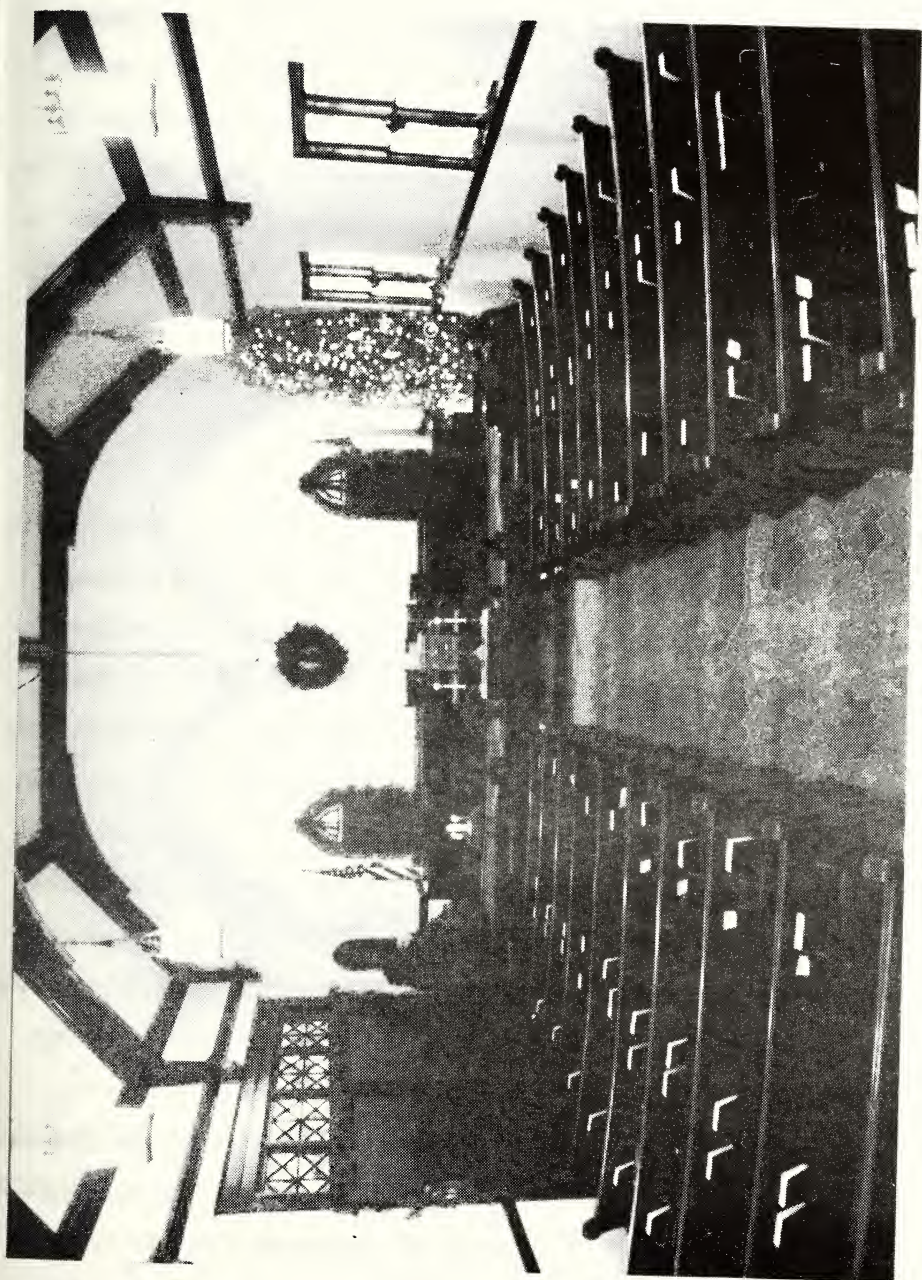
by Dr. J. L. Murphy who was one of the most ardent supporters of the church in Lincoln during her period of trial. Speaking to the Laymans Convention in Salisbury on October 7, 1909, he had this to say regarding the uniqueness of our Reformed heritage:

"The Reformed church is one of the smaller religious organizations in North Carolina. Our smallness has contributed somewhat to the thought that in a world wide movement like the Laymen's missionary movement we could contribute so little that it would hardly be worth the effort. I wish to remove the impression from your minds. Our history in the state is an honorable history. The Moravians in Forsyth, The Friends in Guilford and the Reformed in the Piedmont section have had somewhat of a similar history and a common experience. These are small bodies, but their contributions to the State's history and prosperity have been great and honorable. The multitude has ever been in the wrong. The "little flock" has been God's chosen people. The tribe of Benjamin is no less honorable and useful, because it is the least of the tribes of Israel."

"The position of the Reformed church today is being recognized as the safest and soundest among the Protestant bodies. We recognize and fellowship with the saints wherever found: we join heartily in every movement which makes for the extension of Christ's kingdom. We emphasize the educational in religion, but at the same time hold our revival meetings. We enrich our services with forms and liturgies but place upon no man a yoke grievous to be borne and hence our services may be as free as the impulses of the heart may dictate. We are controlled by no bishop, but we recognize the authority of the Church."

"Laymen, your history is honorable, your heritage is noble, your work is encouraging, the possibilities for greater services are promising, quit







you like men. Lay yourselves upon the altar of His service and say, 'I will go where you want me to go, Dear Lord, and be what you want me to be'."

It is pure speculation, of course, but entirely within the realm of possibility, that among his audience at that layman's convention were brothers Seagle, Fox, Shuford and Ramsaur who are mentioned above as being the first elders and deacons and as having so prominent a role in the rebuilding of Emanuel. Fired by the vision lifted up in this speech, we can see these men (and perhaps others) returning to their homes in Lincolnton determined to rebuild.

## V. MOVING FORWARD

Following the building of the new church, the next major project to face the struggling congregation was the construction of a parsonage. This was begun in 1919 and finished in 1920. This was done on a lot adjacent to the church and was a handsome two-story building. These two buildings and a healthy well organized church bear testimony to the dedication and abilities of Dr. McNairy during his 10 years in Lincolnton. He resigned the pastorate in 1921.

Improvements in the property occurred as needed. In 1931, during the pastorate of the Rev. Hoy Fesperman, a major addition was added to the original structure to provide space for more Sunday School rooms and a ladies parlor. It was also at this time that a more modern heating system was installed.

The one hundred forty-fifth anniversary of the founding of Emanuel Reformed Church, Lincolnton, North Carolina, was observed May 15, 1932. Activities were under the direction of the minister, Rev. Hoy Lee Fesperman. Dr. William H. McNairy, a former pastor, returned to address the

Sunday School, Dr. Jacob C. Leonard, Classical Historian, delivered the anniversary sermon and Elder James A. Shuford read an interesting historical sketch of the congregation. Dr. John H. Keller, preached the sermon at the evening service, thus bringing to its close a memorable day for Reformed Church folks living in Lincolnton and vicinity.

In 1932, the number of members on the congregational roll was 93. The Sunday School enrollment was 94. The Ladies Aid and Missionary Society was organized in 1914 and became the forerunner of the present Women's Fellowship organization. Mrs. W. H. McNairy was the first president of the group.

A tragedy hit the little church on June 10, 1953, when a severe wind and rain storm hit downtown Lincolnton. (Some contemporary observers labeled it a tornado). Winds were so strong that they toppled the steeple of the church which then fell through the roof and into the Sanctuary. Considerable damage was done but repairs were done by Christmas with the auditorium completely renovated. A philosophical James A. Shuford called it a blessing in disguise as he observed that the renovated sanctuary made ours "one of the prettiest churches in Lincolnton."

A modern parsonage was built during the pastorate of Rev. Carl Martin on Victor Street. This was sold in 1979 and the church does not own a parsonage at the time of this writing. A period of significant growth during the pastorate of the Rev. Kenneth Clapp (1973 - 1979) resulted in a new building for Christian Education and a Fellowship Hall. Kitchen and dining facilities are sufficient for the feeding of more than 100 people.

At the time of her Bicentennial celebration on September 29, 1985, the guest speaker was a former pastor, The Rev. Larry Fisher. The



title for his message on that day was "A Pilgrim People." Certainly this was a fitting subject reflecting the growth of a church from a handful in 1910 to more than 200 on her 200th birthday.

Together with the other churches of the German Reformed denomination, Emanuel became part of the Evangelical and Reformed church in 1934. In 1957 a merger between the Evangelical and the Congregational Christians gave us our present name of Emanuel United Church of Christ. With a history to be proud of, and an assurance of the continued guidance of God's Holy Spirit, the people of Emanuel look forward to their third century of service and witness within the community of Lincolnton.

## MINISTERS WHO HAVE SERVED

### I. Those who served in the Old White Church

Rev. Andrew Loretz	1786 - 1812
Rev. John G. Fritchey	1828 - 1840
Rev. J. H. Crawford	1840 - 1842
Rev. Solomon S. Middlekauff	1842 - 1845
Rev. David Crooks	1846 - 1859
Dr. John A. Foil	1882
Stated Supply	
Dr. Joseph L. Murphy	1885 - 1890
Stated Supply	

### II. Those who served in the "New Emanuel"

Rev. William H. McNairy, D.D.	1911 - 1921
Rev. John B. Swartz, Supply	1922
Rev. Banks J. Peeler, D.D.	1922 - 1924
Mr. E. Warner Lenz,	1924 -
Student Supply	
Mr. Harvey W. Black,	1925 -
Student Supply	
Rev. Hugo C. Kellermeyer	1926 - 1929
Rev. Hoy L. Fesperman	1929 - 1935
Rev. Huit R. Carpenter	1935 - 1937
Rev. John H. Keller, D.D.	1937 - 1939
Rev. Walter C. Beck	1939 - 1952
Rev. Lewis E. Everline	1952 - 1956
Rev. Donald C. Selby, PHD	1956 - 1957
Supply	
Rev. C. Larry Fisher	1957 - 1960
Rev. Donald C. Selby	1960 -
Supply	
Mr. Chester C. Byerly	1960 -
Student Supply	
Rev. G. Ermine Plott	1960 - 1961
Stated Supply	
Mr. Chester C. Byerly	1961 -
Student Supply	
Rev. Carl R. Martin	1961 - 1964

Rev. Donald C. Selby	1964 -
Supply	
Rev. Frank W. Snider	1965 - 1969
Rev. Jerry D. Hoskins	1969 - 1972
Dr. King West	1972 - 1973
Supply	
Rev. Kenneth W. Clapp	1973 - 1979
Rev. H. Linn Finger	1979 - Present

The following is a series of brief biographical sketches of several of the ministers who served Emanuel through the years. This is not intended to be an exhaustive treatment of the subject at hand but simply an attempt to give the reader a feel for the sacrifice and dedication made by a few ministers who served during important periods of our history or whose contributions were particularly significant.

### PIONEER PREACHERS

#### Rev. Mr. James (John Nicholas) Martin

Little is known of this pioneer Reformed missionary who preached in the years 1759 - 1764 in the western part of North Carolina and perhaps in parts of South Carolina. The histories of St. Pauls, Startown, Daniels and several of the older churches East of the Catawba also mention Mr. Martin as preaching in those areas during the same period.

There was also a Rev. Mr. Dupest (DePest?) in the same region in 1764. As far as is known Mr. Dupest organized no church in Lincoln County but it is a matter of record that he was given a grant of land on Beaver Dam Creek, near Paysours Mill, Gaston County on April 16, 1765. This would probably make him the first Reformed minister to be

resident west of the Catawba. His name is also mentioned in the records of many of those churches of Western North Carolina which were organized in the pre-Revolutionary period so it may be assumed that like Rev. Mr. Martin, he traveled widely, preaching to German folk wherever found, but probably founded no established congregations. He died of small-pox in Charleston, S. C. near the close of the Revolutionary war.

After these, others preached in scattered German settlements, in the same territory, up to 1789. Little is known of these missionary pastors except their names. They were Revs. Schrum, Schneider, and Bithahn, or Beathahn, perhaps the same as Pithan.

#### Andrew Loretz, Jr. 1762 - 1812

Andrew Loretz, Jr. was born at Ischritschen, in the canton of the Grusons, Switzerland, and was baptized there April 14, 1762. His father, Andrew Loretz, Sr., was a Reformed pastor who served the congregation at Ischritschen from 1759 - 1766. In August of 1784 he left from the town of Chur, in company with his father for the journey to America. The father had been commissioned by the Holland Synods as a missionary to Pennsylvania. After arriving in Pennsylvania, Mr. Loretz, Sr. was assigned to the Church at Iulpehocken. Young Loretz, accompanied his father. This is certain from the fact that he acted as sponsor at the first baptism entered by his father in the Trinity Iulpehocken record.

When his father returned to Switzerland in March 1786 his son did not accompany him. Before the end of the year he had married at

Baltimore, Maryland, a widow, named Schaefer, whose maiden name was Elizabeth Lehman.

About this time he received a call from the Reformed congregations in North Carolina. This implies that he was already ordained by the ministry, but when, where, and by whom is not a matter of record.

Arriving in North Carolina he purchased land from Jacob Shuford in Lincoln County on July 3, 1792. This large tract of land - nearly 2,000 acres - was in the Warlick Settlement of Western Lincoln County and was purchased for the sum of "fourteen pounds, North Carolina currency."

On his land Rev. Loretz constructed a very handsome two-story brick home, which bore on the eastern gable the name and date "AD 1793." From this place he traveled widely serving churches as far away as Guilford County in North Carolina and Lexington district in South Carolina. He was the first minister of record for the Reformed congregation of the Dutch Meeting House in Lincolnton and continued to serve that church until his death on March 31, 1812.

Pastor Loretz is reported to have been a scholarly man, versed in French, Latin and English as well as his native German. As long as he lived he conducted his religious services only in the German language. Tradition speaks of him as a man of prayer. In social contacts he was of a most genial disposition, always ready with a pleasantry. His wit and sense of humor are revealed in the statement to a neighbor that he had three sons and hoped to make of them "a thief, a liar and a beggar" by this he meant a doctor, a lawyer and a preacher.

His contemporary was the Rev. Johan Gottfried Arndt, the pioneer Lutheran Pastor. Living in the same area, and preaching from the same



pulpit in their union churches, these two became close friends. A pact was made that when the first of them died he should be buried by his survivor. It was the said duty of Brother Loretz to conduct the funeral of his friend in 1807 - five years before his own demise.

His will names seven surviving children, several of whom became prominent in the religious and civic affairs of the state. The results of the sale of his property are recorded and reveal him to be a man of substance. It took 3 days in August, 1812, to auction off all his property and the record of the sale filled 15 pages. In addition to much land, he owned many horses, cattle, and sheep. The fact that he also was the owner of several slaves is a shock to the sensibilities of this age, but apparently was acceptable to most of the people of that time and place.

#### Rev. John George Fritchey - 1802 - 1885

The second minister to serve our church was the Rev. George Fritchey who was born near Harrisbury, Pennsylvania, February 7, 1802. His father was a Roman Catholic and his mother was a Reformed. His early education was provided by private instructions from his pastor and a two year course at a "classical school."

In the spring of 1825 by invitation of his pastor, Rev. John Winebrenner, young Fritchey attended the formal opening of the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church at Carlisle. Apparently he was impressed with the seminary and the faculty was impressed with him for he stayed to become their first student.

Having completed his theological studies, he was, in 1828 licensed and ordained as a missionary. His original intent was to labor in the

west where pioneer Germans had already pushed beyond the Alleghenys to settle the great heartland of America. With this intent he left home, traveling toward the setting sun - his destination unknown. Arriving in Chambersburg, he was dissuaded from this western purpose by the pastor of the Reformed Church, the Rev. F. A. Rahausser, who challenged him to travel southward where many German Reformed churches were without pastoral leadership.

Following a journey of two weeks he arrived in Lincolnton, N. C. where he was greeted warmly by the members of our church whose pulpit had been vacant for a period of sixteen years. Here Pastor Fritchey labored for twelve years with unflagging zeal and great success. Like his predecessor, Mr. Loretz, his parish extended over much of Piedmont North Carolina and even into South Carolina.

Unwilling to bring up his growing family in the midst of slavery, he resigned in 1840 and returned to Pennsylvania. After several lengthy and rewarding pastorates he "retired" at age 65 and moved back to Lancaster County. Here he continued to work diligently for the upbuilding of the Kingdom. It was said that he would look about him and find the smallest, poorest, weakest congregation and accept the personal challenge of building that congregation up to a point where they could call a full-time minister. The last of these challenges was the Zwingli German church near Harrisburg, which he "adopted" at the age of 80. Using all the skills and dedication developed over more than a half-century of ministry he helped that church to reach a self-sustaining status.

Mr. Fritchey died at his residence in Lancaster, Pennsylvania on March 12, 1885, aged 83 years, 1 month and 5 days. A contemporary

gave this testimony regarding the man a few days after his death:

"In his make-up there was no guile or cunning. His real purposes were always in his words. All that was within him came to the surface (sometimes in a blunt way, or rather strong phraseology). If he agreed with you, you would know it, and you could rely upon him. If he differed with you, he was not slow to say so in plain terms. But difference of opinion did not affect his fraternal sympathy and confidence."

#### Rev. David Crooks - 1812 - 1859

Except for the founding pastor, Rev. Loretz, no minister served Emanuel longer than the Rev. David Crooks. A native of Pennsylvania, Pastor Crooks came south immediately following his theological preparation. In 1839 he accepted a call to serve the Davidson Charge and was ordained by the Classis of North Carolina.

After serving the Davidson Charge for seven years he accepted a call to Emanuel, Lincolnton. In this charge he preached nearly fourteen years. During his total pastorate of 21 years he baptized four hundred and fifty-three persons, received between three and four hundred members into the church, and preached two hundred and seventeen funeral sermons.

As a minister and as a man, Pastor Crooks was an example to all who knew him. A contemporary described him as a kind and gentle person who took a particular interest in children. The magnitude of his labors are particularly remarkable in light of the fact that he was in very poor health during the entire period of his last pastorate. Fourteen years before his death, his affliction was diagnosed as pulmonary consumption. In spite of declining health, he continued to labor until

only a few weeks before his death. Though he only lived to the age of 46 years he labored fruitfully in the vineyard of the Lord and made good accounting of such time as was granted him.

His last resting place was the cemetery of St. Matthews church. The Rev. J. Ingold preached the funeral sermon using the text: "He being dead, yet speaketh" from Hebrews 11:4.

#### The Rev. William H. McNairy, DD

The Rev. Mr. McNairy was born November 23, 1886 in Guilford County, North Carolina. He was a graduate of Catawba College and attended Ursinus Seminary. He was awarded the Doctorate of Divinity degree by Catawba College in 1937. He pastored several churches in piedmont North Carolina, but his longest pastorate by far was the ten years he served in Lincolnton from 1911 - 1921.

Emanuel owes a great debt to Pastor McNairy. When he began his work in Lincolnton in 1911, the prospects of success were dim. Only a handful of people in the community still identified themselves as members of the German Reformed denomination. Though the history of the church extended back for more than 100 years, there were several long periods when the congregation had been virtually non-existent. Situated as she is on the perimeter of the territory originally settled by the German Reforms, Emanuel has always had something of an identity problem. It should also be noted that until recent years we could not expect much growth from the receiving of members who were new to Lincolnton and had belonged to a Reformed Church in another area. There was very little in-migration, and those who did move here almost always had ties to another denomination.

In spite of these problems, and with a zeal that was infectious, Pastor McNairy carried on the work he was called to do. Gradually the church grew in size and influence. A new church building was dedicated in 1913 and the parsonage in 1920. These were both handsome and substantial structures - attesting to the faith and stewardship of Pastor McNairy and his little flock.

Pastor McNairy's only surviving daughter, Gladys, is the wife of the Rev. Frank Bostian. Since Pastor Bostian's retirement they make their home in Landis, North Carolina. Mrs. Bostian recalls hearing stories of how her father not only preached on Sunday, made house calls throughout the week, but also wielded hammer and saw in the actual construction of the church and the parsonage.

The last two years of their ministry in Lincolnton was carried out against a backdrop of great personal tragedy for the McNairys. Their 16 year old daughter, Lizabell, died on Christmas day, 1919. She is buried with her parents in the plot of her maternal grandparents in the cemetery of Daniels Reformed Church five miles west of Lincolnton.

After his pastorate in Lincolnton, Pastor McNairy served for 9 years (1923 - 1932) as the Superintendant of the Nazareth Childrens Home in Rockwell, North Carolina. A widower for eleven years, he died December 20, 1941 in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania while living with the Bostians. Certainly Pastor McNairy was God's "right man at the right time" as he guided the small congregation in Lincolnton away from the brink of oblivion.



## ARCHITECTURAL NOTES

When the "New Emanuel" was organized, one of the first tasks facing the congregation was the building of a new church. As previously noted, a lot was purchased from the Baptist congregation for \$1,600.00. The next step was the hiring of an architect. Mr. Henry E. Bonitz of Wilmington was secured for this task. His plans for a Gothic Revival structure in brick and cast stone were approved by the congregation on January 12, 1913. At this same meeting a building committee was appointed consisting of the Rev. W. H. McNairy, chairman, James a Shuford, E. C. Shuford, and Frank Ramsaur.

The fact that less than twelve months later the first service was held in the new sanctuary attests to the speed with which the committee and the builders did their work. Mrs. Gladys Bostian, daughter of Rev. McNairy, reported that her father acted as the prime contractor for the project - thus saving money for the church and also ensuring that the work progressed expeditiously.

At the annual meeting of the congregation held on January 3, 1915, the building committee made its final report:

### Income:

Monies collected from all sources .....	\$7,137.19
Borrowed from Soliday Fund, Catawba College	500.00
Borrowed from Home Missions Board	<u>1,500.00</u>
	\$9,137.19

### Expenses:

For building lot .....	\$1,600.00
Building material	5,676.78
Labor	1,603.18
General Expenses	<u>257.23</u>
	\$9,137.19

## MEMORIAL WINDOWS

Clockwise from northeast corner of sanctuary:

1. In loving memory of E. Warner Lentz
2. Men's Bible Class
3. In memory of P. D. Hinson  
Evening Circle W.M.S., 1928
4. In loving memory of Louise Carpenter, 1909 - 1920
5. In loving memory of our mother  
Kittie Ramsour Rudisill, 1878 - 1921
6. Daniel A. Seagle, 1868 - 1935  
By Kate Houser Seagle
7. Adolphus P. Willis, 1873 - 1936  
By Della Heavner Willis

The large window at back of sanctuary is a beautiful rendering of William Holman Hunt's "The Light of the World" and is inscribed "In memory of Lizabell McNairy and in honor of the Rev. and Mrs. W. H. McNairy - W.M.S.

## DEDICATION

This publication is dedicated to the memory of Mr. James A. Shuford, 1886 - 1977 and his wife Mrs. Mary Hoover Shuford, 1886 - 1987.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord ... for their works do follow them." (Revelation 14:13)

## CREDITS

The sketch on the cover was done by Larry Clapp during the pastorate of his brother, the Rev. Kenneth Clapp.

The sketch of the Old White Church is an artist's rendering of what the church may have looked like and was done for the Old White Church Bicentennial Celebration by Sandra Lynch.

The picture of the Sanctuary was taken during Advent, 1986 by Kathy Campbell Beal.

## SOURCES

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The German Immigration in Pennsylvania through the Port of Philadelphia from 1700 - 1775. Differenderffer, Frank Reid.

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The Annals of Lincoln County; Sherrill, William, 1937.

### Essay:

"The History of Our Church" An essay prepared by James A. Shuford for the Self Study Project in 1961.

### Periodical:

"The Standard" - The official publication of the Southern Synod of the Reformed Church. All issues from 1909 - 1913.

### Conversations:

Bostian, Mrs. Frank (Gladys)

Shuford, Mrs. James (Mary)









